



# PERSONAL NARRATIVES

OF EVENTS IN THE

# WAR OF THE REBELLION,

BEING PAPERS READ BEFORE THE

RHODE ISLAND SOLDIERS AND SAILORS  
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# PERSONAL RECOLLECTIONS

OF

## GENERAL SHERIDAN.

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BY

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[Formerly of the First Maine Cavalry.]

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IN April, 1864, while at home on a veteran furlough, I took up the local daily paper one evening to read the war news, and there, to my surprise, saw a big heading, "General Sherman to command the Cavalry Corps of the Army of the Potomac." The telegraphic dispatch underneath this heading was of only a few lines and merely repeated this statement. What did it mean? Being so fortunate as to be an enlisted man in this same cavalry corps, (a Sergeant in the First Maine Cavalry) and expecting to reach my regiment at the front in time to join in the opening of the coming campaign, I was naturally interested. General Grant had recently been appointed to the command of all the Union armies,

and it was well understood that he was to personally direct the movements of the Army of the Potomac. Naturally we expected some changes in corps and division commanders, but we were not prepared for this. General Sherman was doing good work in the west, and we could see no reason for his removal, nor could we understand why he should be taken from the command of an army and placed in command of simply a corps. In a day or two, however, the matter was partially explained by a dispatch stating that "Gen. P. H. Sheridan was to command the Cavalry Corps of the Army of the Potomac." Now our wonder ran in another direction, viz.: "Who is General Sheridan?" We learned that he was from the western armies, and learned but little more than that, so had to content ourselves with the thought that he was known to General Grant, and had by him been placed in command of our corps. This illustrates how little known was General Sheridan at that time.

At the expiration of my furlough I returned to the front, still wondering who General Sheridan was, and what sort of a commander of the Cavalry

Corps he would make. I reached my regiment on the evening of May 3d, and at midnight that night we were in readiness to move. We crossed the Rapidan by daylight the next morning, and entered upon the grand campaign which began with the Wilderness and ended only when the Army of the Potomac had become settled down before Petersburg. The Cavalry Corps remained with the Army of the Potomac in the Wilderness a few days, doing its share of the campaigning and the fighting, and then swung around the left flank, cut loose from the army, and started on a raid direct toward Richmond. The first day, May 9th, the advance met and defeated the enemy at Beaver Dam Station on the Virginia Central Railroad, captured a large wagon train, released about 400 Union prisoners on their way to Richmond, and destroyed the station, and railroad and bridges for miles. The next morning, May 10th, we were awakened by a reveillé of shells flying over us from a battery among the hills, but a force was sent out and silenced the battery, and we proceeded to get breakfast. This morning the advance met the enemy—it seemed not more than a pistol

shot from General Sheridan's headquarters — and a running fight ensued which did not last long before the enemy disappeared, when the day's march continued uninterruptedly

Before dark we halted in some nice, clean woods, and received the orders to "Unsaddle and go into camp." This was something new and something exceedingly nice in our experience in raiding — two days' march outside of our lines and only a day's march from the Confederate capital, way down in the enemy's country and the enemy all around us, and the orders "Unsaddle and go into camp." This was different from our experience hitherto when outside our lines, and even sometimes when campaigning within our lines. Then, not only must the horses remain saddled and packed, but the men must sleep with the bridles over their arms, or stand "to horse" all night ; or perhaps take turns standing "to horse," one man looking out for four horses while the other three slept ; or, worse yet, march day and night. But we were fast finding out what sort of a commander General Sheridan was. It was evident that he had some regard for the comfort and

condition of his men and of the horses ; that he did not intend to needlessly tire out either ; that he believed men and horses must have rest in order to do the best work and the best fighting. Here we were to have a good night's sleep, unless the enemy prevented, and the horses were to have a rest, also, and both would be the better for it in the morning. The pickets were out in every direction, of course, and men and horses at the picket reserves were held in readiness for whatever might occur,—this was inevitable—but the great majority of the command was to have a good night's rest. We made up our little beds that night cheerfully, and lay down to sleep with high respect—respect that was soon to ripen into love—for General Sheridan. And we appreciated this for our horses as well as for ourselves, for the cavalryman knew that his horse was his best friend, would steal for his horse when he wouldn't steal for himself, and any kindness to his horse was real kindness to him.

Our sleep was sweet and undisturbed and we awoke on the morning of the 11th very much refreshed, and ourselves and horses feeling enough

better for the night's thorough rest, we thought, to pay for the risk of unsaddling if there was any risk. We prepared and ate breakfast at leisure, another unexpected pleasure as well as novelty in raiding, but the fighting commenced almost as soon as we were in the saddle, and lasted all day. The rear of the column, with which was my regiment, did much more fighting than marching, and made little progress on the road, but the advance reached and took the outer line of the fortifications around Richmond, capturing twenty pieces of artillery, and sent back the glorious news to us, which we received as we were leaving the skirmish line for the last time that day, about dusk. Then we began to march, and just at daylight passed through the outer line of fortifications, and joined the remainder of the column, within hearing of the bells of Richmond.

It was afterwards learned, or at least we were told, that the commander of the Confederate cavalry had "laid a trap" for the Yankee cavalry, and that Jeff. Davis and his cabinet had come out on Academy Hill to see the Yankee cavalry fall into this trap and

all be captured. Whether or not this was true we never knew, but we found ourselves in what was wonderfully like a trap that morning. It only needed for us to know that General Custar was the day before allowed to carry the outer line of works for the purpose of enticing the whole force inside them, to be sure that there was a trap. Afterwards we were willing to believe that General Sheridan knew what he was about when he went in there. The situation was like this: In our front was the Chickahominy river, over which was Meadow bridge —a bridge about a mile long, over running water and swamp alternately. This bridge had been partially destroyed and the flooring was gone, while on the north side of the river coming down to the end of the bridge, was a strong, heavily-manned earth-work in a pine grove, evidently recently built. On our left was the outer line of fortifications, and as we afterwards learned, the Chickahominy, which was considered impassable. On our right and rear was the second line of fortifications, troops from which appeared almost as soon as our rear entered within the outer line. Surrounded, surely. There

were but two things to do—to go ahead, or to take the back track. Either way meant severe fighting. But to take the back track was not General Sheridan's way. He decided to go ahead. Meadow bridge was repaired by General Merritt's division under a heavy fire from the enemy, where some of the troops crossed over, and drove the enemy from the earthworks, and the whole force marched over without further molestation. In the meantime the fighting at the right and rear, with the division in which I was (Gen. D. McM. Gregg's), and General Wilson's division, had been severe, some of the regiments losing very heavily, but the enemy was driven back into the fortifications, and we followed the column across Meadow bridge without being disturbed. That night we went into bivouac near Mechanicsville, and had a good night's rest within a few miles of Richmond. In his official report of this day's work General Sheridan modestly says: "The enemy considered us completely cornered, but such was not the case." General Grant, in his *Memoirs* in describing the situation of General Sheridan and his troops in this affair, says: "He

was in a perilous situation from which few generals could have extricated themselves."

And the country and the enemy began to know who General Sheridan was, while the men in his command had acquired a confidence in him which they never lost, and which grew stronger and stronger with every day's service with him. It may be said, in passing, that the rebel cavalry leader, Gen. J. E. B. Stuart, was killed during these last two days, as was also Gen. James B. Gordon, commanding a brigade of Confederate cavalry.

Then came a day or two of marching, a day or two of rest at Haxall's Landing, on the James river, where the command was supplied with rations from transports sent up for that purpose, and the wounded were sent away on the transports; and then we started for the Union lines. There was little fighting on the return march, but some wonderful bridge building and the usual amount of foraging, scouting, and picketing, and we rejoined the Army of the Potomac on the seventeenth day after our departure, with men and horses in as good condition, almost, as though we had been campaigning in our own lines,

thanks to General Sheridan's care of his command. Had this raid been of no use in a military point of view, other than the confidence it gave the men in their new commander,—thus preparing them for future glorious service,—and the respect it taught the enemy for General Sheridan and the cavalry corps, it would have been a successful expedition indeed, but General Grant, in his official report, after relating the victorious deeds of the expedition, says: "This raid had the effect of drawing off the whole of the enemy's cavalry force, and making it comparatively easy to guard our trains."

We found the Army of the Potomac on the North Anna river, instead of in the Wilderness, where we left it, General Grant having been all the time nearing Richmond and drawing his lines tighter around the Confederacy. By this time he was ready to make another of his flank movements to the left, around the right of the enemy, and General Sheridan and his cavalry were ordered to take the advance. Scarcely twenty-four hours after our return from our long ride, and we were in the saddle again. We marched and manœuvred all night, crossed the

Pamunkey on pontoons, near Hanover Town, the next morning, after a brisk skirmish for the "right of way," and the following day fought what General Grant pronounced a "severe but successful cavalry engagement" near Hawes Shop, holding the position until the infantry had formed their lines; then again around to the left, opening the fight at Coal Harbor and holding the enemy until the infantry were in position; then a few days of picketing and scouting with the Army of the Potomac; and then, on the 7th of June, two divisions of the cavalry corps (including Gregg's) under General Sheridan, started on an expedition against the Virginia Central Railroad. This time we were twenty-two days outside our lines, took part in several heavy engagements, and any number of skirmishes, did some very hard marching, the weather being exceedingly hot and the roads dusty, but got pretty good rest nights, and on the return march took a very large wagon train from White House Landing to the Army of the Potomac in safety, though the enemy made a heroic attempt to capture the train, and the fighting in its defense was of the fiercest.

We found the Army of the Potomac this time settling down around Petersburg, and the long siege had commenced. After a day or two of scouting on the left of the army, we went into camp on the 4th of July, and celebrated this glorious anniversary by drawing soft bread—the first we had had since crossing the Rapidan, just two months before, and during those two months so active had been the campaign, we had slept two nights in the same place but twice. It was one of the most active campaigns of the war—the most active of which we took part—yet men and horses stood it splendidly, and came out of it in fine condition, owing to General Sheridan's admirable method of conducting a campaign, with care always for the best comfort of man and beast that the circumstances would allow. If it were necessary to march all night, or day and night, it was done, and fighting was always in order, but rest was given when it was possible, and men and horses suffered less than on many shorter and less active campaigns. Prince Frederick, of Hohenzollern, says: "The late Emperor often spoke of General Sheridan as the man who knew best how to

make cavalry horses do more work than any other cavalry commander got out of them." Was not his ever-watchful care of his horses one of the secrets of this?

The cavalry corps had learned what sort of a commander General Sheridan was. He had secured our confidence thoroughly — we would go anywhere he said, without hesitation. We were "all right" if we knew he was with us. Indeed, we had not been defeated since he took command of the corps, and we had become accustomed to going into a fight feeling that the enemy was sure to be whipped anyway. Every comrade will realize how much better men will fight under such circumstances. Besides this confidence, he had won our love. More than a month ago we had given him the pet name, "Little Phil." Every man in the command knew him personally. During our two months' campaign scarcely a day passed that all did not see General Sheridan. He rode the entire length of the column on the march daily. At least we saw him daily, whether we were in the advance, at the rear, or in the centre of the column. Some time during the day, and

often more than once, he rode by us, and we naturally supposed in order to do that he must ride by the entire column. And this was done without any appearance of show or ostentation — simply as a part of his duty as commander of the corps or leader of the expedition. It came so naturally that we did not notice it at first, and it was only after some weeks under him, that in talking over the events of the campaign, we realized that we had seen General Sheridan almost every day. Thus the men became acquainted with his form and face, so that they knew him at once, even at a distance, and thus they saw that he kept watch over his whole command, which still more endeared him to them. So our commander became to us something tangible, something we saw and knew, instead of a mere name, as before. General Sheridan was a part of us, as well as our leader. There was no more fuss and feathers about him than about General Grant. The common soldier's uniform was good enough for him. I do not remember ever to have noticed any insignia of rank about him. The only distinguishing feature of his uniform was his hat, a dark drab, square across the

top, and wrinkled at the sides as though it had been sat down on. This hat is perpetuated in the famous picture, "Sheridan's Ride." And by the way, that is the only picture of General Sheridan that I ever saw that brought him back to mind. The photographs taken recently are of a different General Sheridan than we knew in the field, and though I have one purchased soon after the war, yet I never liked it, nor could I ever make it look like our "Little Phil." There was no military stiffness about his manner with the men. He would as soon ask a light from the pipe of an enlisted man as from the cigar of an officer, and so far as the enlisted men knew, he did so oftener. In short, he had become the beau ideal of the men in his corps. He meant "fight" all the time, and his whole energy was devoted to that end, and to keeping his men and horses in condition to fight, and other matters now forgotten. He had inspired us with his own enthusiasm, and we had won his confidence as he had won ours. Is it to be wondered at that men enthusiastically followed a leader whom they knew personally, and under whom they could enter upon a campaign, or

go into battle, with a feeling that there was no possibility of anything but victory?

There was a month of comparative quiet as the lines were settling down around Petersburg, with the exception of a demonstration on the right in the latter part of July, and then General Sheridan was sent into the valley of the Shenandoah, taking with him two divisions of the cavalry, but leaving General Gregg's division with the Army of the Potomac. Of his glorious deeds in the valley we had no part, but every soldier, every reader of history, knows them by heart. It became the duty of our division to be tender for the Army of the Potomac — first on the right, then on the left — and the remainder of that season, until far into the winter, was a season of hard, heavy work, during which many were the times we wished, from the depths of our hearts, that we were with General Sheridan.

March 29, 1865, we broke camp and left our winter quarters on the Jerusalem plank road, at the left of Petersburg. It was a cold, cheerless morning, and we were not in the best of spirits. We were about to enter upon a campaign which we had every

reason to expect would be a fighting campaign, and that under a new and untried commander, for during the winter Gen. David McM. Gregg, who had led our division since its organization more than two years before, and who we believed was the equal of any of the division commanders, and who was second only to General Sheridan in our hearts, had resigned, and Gen. George Crooke had been assigned to the command of the division. General Crooke might be the best cavalry commander in the world, but we knew little about him. He had not been tried by our fire. More than that, the experience of the latter portion of the previous year had taught us that the service of our cavalry division with the whole Army of the Potomac was a hard service. Consequently we made our preparations for leaving camp in no very enthusiastic mood. In short, we were feeling decidedly blue. We got into line after a while, and were sullenly waiting for the order, "Forward!" when we saw a force approaching. We watched it listlessly until we recognized "Little Phil" Sheridan's headquarter flag. This inspired us with hope. In a few moments we saw "Little

Phil" himself, and his staff, and his famous scouts, and his cavalry fresh from their glorious victories in the Shenandoah Valley. The surprise was complete, for we did not know he was anywhere near us, and was as welcome as it was complete. The cheers we sent up told us no uncertain story, and with those cheers went out all the distrust, all the melancholy forebodings with which we had been tormented. Then we were ready to go anywhere or to fight anything. We were new men in a moment. What might be in store for us we knew not, nor really cared, for we were with Sheridan; once more were a portion of his glorious cavalry, and we felt that with him at our head we were safe. Some of us might lay down our lives to be sure; a few might be taken prisoners, to suffer all the horrors of Belle Isle and of Andersonville; others might be wounded, to linger and suffer awhile only to die, or perchance recover sufficiently to live long years as cripples and sufferers; but the majority of us would come out all right with the glories of victory. We believed that under that intrepid leader we could whip anything that could be brought against us, as

we had done already on many fields now famous. We could not help thinking of the time he took command of the cavalry of the Army of the Potomac, less than a year ago. Then he was unknown, now his name was a household word in all the loyal North—and throughout the South, too—and "Sheridan's Ride" was a familiar poem everywhere. From this time until the end of the campaign, there was no thought of being blue, no feeling of distrust, no hint of foreboding.

I am not going to give an account of that glorious campaign of twelve days—eminently General Sheridan's campaign—though the story is one I love to tell. It was a grand campaign, and a campaign to take part in which was full compensation for all the hardships and sufferings and defeats of the previous four years. But the story of the last day is all I have time to relate. We had gone into bivouac the night of April 8th, and a portion of the men were sleeping sweetly while the remainder were preparing for sleep, with pleasant anticipations, when our brigade (Gen. C. H. Smith's) was ordered to "saddle and pack up, and be ready to move out at once."

The order was obeyed, of course, but not without a deal of growling. In less than an hour we were mounted and on the march, the understanding being that this, our brigade only, was ordered out, and that we were going out to hold a road. We learned afterwards that General Sheridan thought General Lee was in a tight place, and might try to get away that night by the Lynchburg pike ; and so ordered General Crooke to look out for Lee, when General Crooke selected our brigade for this purpose, giving us a section of artillery. We had no idea of the importance of the duty we were going on at that time, however. Soon we reached the burning wagons of the enemy's train, scattered munitions of war of every kind, muskets, clothing, blankets, and all sorts of stores strewed in every direction — some partially destroyed and some uninjured — the burning wagons giving the scene a wildly picturesque glow. We had scarcely passed this scene of destruction when the advance found the enemy's pickets and commenced skirmishing. Our march had been slow before, and was now even more so ; march a few steps, halt a few moments, then march again,

then halt again, until midnight, when we were drawn up in line of battle on the right of the road, behind what we afterwards learned was Clover Hill. A staff officer rode to the Colonel and said in a low voice, "Prepare your men to fight on foot; give no loud orders; let there be as little noise as possible; I will show you where to take position." This was quietly done, the led horses were left there, and my regiment was taken across the road, advanced to the brow of the hill, and formed a line in a direction at right angles with the road, which was on our right. The firing had ceased as soon as our force stopped advancing, although the occasional crack of a rifle and hum of a bullet, sounding more wicked than ever in the stillness of midnight, told us the enemy was near and knew of our presence. Then there was a strange, weird scene—the men noiselessly carrying rails and building breastworks, their forms showing at intervals against the sky and then disappearing. Little did they then think that these would be the last breastworks they would ever build. By one o'clock a pretty good line of works had been put up, and the men were resting on their arms, the

most of them asleep, but enough awake to give the alarm in case of need.

With the first blush of dawn, Sunday morning, April 9th, the enemy sent us over a "good morning" in the shape of whistling bullets, suddenly awakening the blue-bloused sleepers, whose first motion was for their carbines with one hand as they rubbed open their eyes with the other, and a scattering skirmish fire commenced which lasted an hour or more without amounting to much. The daylight revealed our position. Two other regiments of the brigade were with us, dismounted, the remaining regiment was on the flanks mounted, and there was a section of artillery in the road at our rear. On the left there was no force that we could see; on our right were woods, but we could hear no firing in that direction in our immediate vicinity. The skirmish fire grew quite hot at times, and then dwindled down to occasional shots, the enemy apparently feeling our strength. After a while we could see, away in the distance, a body of the enemy's troops working around our left. We could see them plainly, and could not understand why there was no force to stop

them — why no one seemed to be paying any attention to them. In a short time our line was swinging around on a line with the road, to meet this attempt to flank us. We began to wonder where the rest of our troops were if the enemy could come around us in that way, but all such disrespectful thoughts were quieted when we saw "Little Phil" riding along in our rear, in full view of the situation, accompanied by a staff officer, looking as unconcerned as if 'twas all right, and apparently well satisfied with the position of affairs. At any rate that was the impression he left with us by his bearing as he rode away to the right without so much as a word to any one connected with the little fight we were having. This put new life into the men. They didn't care if the whole Confederate army was coming around their left if Phil Sheridan didn't.

"His presence there, without a word, was worth a thousand men."

And they rallied again on the road, from which they had retired a short distance, and were ready to meet anything.

We could hear no firing except in our own front, and supposed that we were all that were engaged, and were merely "holding a road." The line in our near front grew stronger and came nearer. Our carbines did all that could be expected, and inspired the enemy with a wholesome fear. Our little brigade fought well, losing ground little by little, being pressed slowly back. The enemy gained no great advantage, but were slowly crowding us back by sheer force of numbers, while if they had fought with half their vim of the year before, we should very soon have lost sight of the road we were trying to hold. Slowly they pushed us back, until we reached the woods in rear of the field, when we were met by a force of infantry — black faces, to be sure, but with blue uniforms and loyal hearts, and trusty rifles, and we were just as glad to see them as though they had been pure Anglo-Saxon. We passed through their lines, into and through the woods, and into a field into which our led horses had been taken, while the negroes took our place, charging and driving the enemy from the field.

We found our horses, took account of casualties,

ate a bit — those who had it to eat — and then waited patiently the turn of events, expecting there was to be hard fighting before the day was over, and expecting, also, to have our share of it. But for some reason there was no firing. The quiet was oppressive, for it betokened, we thought, a fiercer storm when it did come. What it meant we knew not; but all were anxious. Suddenly there came a rumor that "Lee had surrendered." No one had any faith in the rumor, and the men were cautious about repeating it one to another. But the rumor continued to come, and to come from different directions, and bearing the stamp of different authorities. Before it assumed definite form, we were mounted and marched over the battlefield of the morning, up the hill where we formed the line at midnight the night before, up to the top of the hill, looking over which we could see the flags of truce and the two armies lying on their arms. Certainly negotiations were pending, and we began to hope there might be some truth in the rumor. Then we learned that the road we had been holding was the road to Lynchburg, the only way General Lee had to escape

from the position into which he had been driven by General Sheridan. We rode back, dismounted, and lay around waiting for further orders, but none came. All the afternoon the rumors of Lee's surrender continued to come, but we got nothing that was official. We bivouacked for the night in the same state of uncertainty, got a good night's sleep, and were awakened the next morning by the sounds of a heavy artillery fire. Our first thought was that that meant fighting ; that the negotiations were unsuccessful, and "How are you, Lee surrendered," was heard throughout the bivouac in tones of doubt and sinking hope. A little later orders were received by each company commander, "Saddle and pack up, and be ready to move out immediately ; notify your men that we are to ride through the enemy's camp, and caution them to use no insulting language toward the conquered foe." Thus we, who fought the last fight, received the first official knowledge of General Lee's surrender, some hours after the whole loyal north had learned the joyful news and had began to celebrate the glorious event. Even then we did not fully realize the position of affairs.

Though what we had been confidently expecting, it had come too suddenly, and was too great a change in our condition and prospects to be at once thoroughly understood. But we were happy enough, feeling a deep sense of happiness too strong for outward demonstration. As we rode over Clover Hill and reached Appomattox Court House, "Little Phil" Sheridan stood by the roadside looking as unconcerned as if he had done nothing, and as we saw him, all the pent up joy, all the uncertainty, all the alternating hope and fear of the past few hours found vent in cheers such as only victorious soldiers could give. Now we realized the whole matter, and could talk it over with each other, while up to that time there had been but little disposition to talk about it. The war was over.

I have spoken of this as General Sheridan's campaign, and to him must be given the credit of the whole of it. With due deference to our great commander, General Grant, who was in command of all the armies and directed General Sheridan when and how to start on the campaign, and furnished him with troops and with orders as he

wanted them, and with due deference to General Meade, who was in command of the Army of the Potomac, which captured Petersburg and furnished the troops for Sheridan, it must be acknowledged that General Sheridan planned and fought the campaign from the beginning to the end. The movement was begun March 29th. March 30th it rained heavily all day. March 31st General Sheridan met the enemy and made a gallant fight resulting in a victory the fruit of which was the securing of the position which made the splendid victory of the next day at Five Forks possible. That night he sent word to General Grant of the day's events, and in return received a dispatch from General Grant, announcing that he had sent to his (Sheridan's) support the Fifth Corps and McKenzie's cavalry, and saying :

“ You will assume command of the whole force sent to operate with you, and use it to the best of your ability to destroy the force which your command has fought so gallantly to-day.”

He did use this force to the best of his ability. He won the victory at Five Forks. This was General Sheridan's battle. He planned it; he fought

it ; he inspired his troops with some of his own enthusiasm, which, added to the confidence they had in him, won it. This was the first of April. General Sheridan kept on his way, still intent on obeying his orders to destroy the enemy's force, and needing no further orders. General Grant, in his *Memoirs*, says :

“The rebel government left Richmond about 2 o'clock on the afternoon of the second. At night Lee ordered his troops to assemble at Amelia Court House, his object being to get away, join Johnston, if possible, and to try and crush Sherman before I could get there. As soon as I was sure of this I notified Sheridan, and directed him to move out on the Danville Railroad to the south side of the Appomattox River as speedily as possible. He replied that he *already had some of his command nine miles out.*”

The retreat and the pursuit had fairly commenced, and General Sheridan led the pursuit. From this time he was continually sending back dispatches to General Grant, with suggestions as to what could be done, and these suggestions invariably came back as orders. For instance, as you will all remember, General Sheridan wrote General Grant April 6th, after detailing the position of the forces and the events of the day, “ If the thing is pressed, I think

Lee will surrender" To this General Grant sent back the laconic order, "Press things." And he did press things. Whatever General Sheridan wished to do, he had only to signify this wish to General Grant, and he was allowed to do it. He asked for more troops, and they were quickly at his disposal. The Fifth Corps was wanted by General Meade, and the Sixth Corps was sent to take its place, and later other troops. Never were troops handled better. The infantry of the Army of the Potomac never before did such marching—never marched so many miles a day—and yet I never heard any complaint on their part of hard marching. The cavalry started out in the morning early, marched all day except when they halted to fight, and at night found the infantry right up with them, some nights the cavalry resting in quiet inside the infantry pickets. When the cavalry found the enemy, the infantry was at hand ready at the first call. The infantry bore a noble part in the glorious engagement at Sailor's Creek, April 6th; that night we slept inside their pickets; the next morning bright and early we were up and away almost before

the infantry men had got their eyes open ; yet that afternoon, when some of the cavalry got into a snarl at the right of Farmville, and it was thought the infantry might be wanted, there the infantry was, all ready. I firmly believe that General Sheridan could get more marching and more fighting out of troops, with less fatigue and less disaster, than any other soldier in the world's history

For these reasons it seems to me that to General Sheridan must be given the credit of planning and fighting this campaign. Nor does this detract at all from the reputation, or the merits, or the services of General Grant. A smaller general than he would have hesitated to give a subordinate such powers as he gave to General Sheridan, not having full confidence in the subordinate's judgment or ability, and would have preferred to look over the situation himself, and perhaps change the plans, thus losing valuable time, if nothing worse. A still smaller general might feel inclined to follow a like method in a less commendable spirit, fearing that perchance the subordinate might receive more credit than he did himself. But General Grant, the great commander of

all, was great enough to recognize the ability and the judgment of General Sheridan, and to trust them implicitly, and had the real, true patriotism to wish and work for the success of the campaign, without a thought or care as to who would receive the credit therefor.

Thus far I have written almost entirely of matters which came within my own experience. With the permission of the Society, I would like to say a few words in a general way. I was surprised and pained at the tone of the greater portion of the American press in speaking of General Sheridan at the time of his death. While high meed of praise was given him, it yet seemed to me that full justice was not done to him. He was given due credit for his dash and brilliancy, for his fighting qualities, for the enthusiasm with which he inspired his men, for his successful carrying out of orders, for the battles he fought, and was spoken of in the highest terms as a cavalry general and a leader, but coupled with this praise was frequently the intimation that after all he was not a great general; that though he could execute the plans of another as no other could, yet he

could not plan a battle or a campaign. I have endeavored to show that General Sheridan planned and fought the last grand campaign of the Army of the Potomac, after he received the initiatory orders from General Grant. Was not that a proof of great generalship? But what better authority on General Sheridan's generalship can be had than his own commander, who served with him, who knew how to estimate his character, and who understood the profession of war? General Grant, in his *Memoirs*, in speaking of a visit to General Sheridan in the Valley of the Shenandoah, September 15, 1864, says:

"When Sheridan arrived, I asked him if he had a map showing the position of his army and that of the enemy. He at once drew one out of his side pocket, showing all roads and streams and the camps of the two armies. He said that if he had permission he would move so and so (pointing out how) against the Confederates, and that he could whip them. Before starting I had drawn up a campaign for Sheridan, which I brought with me; but seeing that he was so clear and positive in his views, and so confident of success, I said nothing about this and did not take it out of my pocket.

I told him to make the attack at his own time and according to his own plans, and I immediately started to return to the army about Richmond. Sheridan moved at the time he had fixed upon, and won a most decisive victory."

Who planned and fought that campaign? And it would be well to bear in mind the fact that whenever General Sheridan planned a battle or a campaign victory followed. He had all the dash and brilliancy for which he has been given credit, but the dash was ever made brilliant by the good generalship and unerring judgment which always accompanied it.

General Grant also speaks many times, both in his *Memoirs* and in his official report of the last campaign, in the highest terms of General Sheridan's generalship, and in speaking of the battle of Five Forks says: "Sheridan's generalship will take rank with any on record."

General Sherman, the only one now living of the great Union leaders of the war, who knew General Sheridan well, and who all will admit is competent to form a correct opinion in the matter, said, soon after General Sheridan's death:

"General Sheridan impressed me personally as a typical Irishman, impulsive, enthusiastic, social, and pleasant. With all of his impulsiveness, however, he was a deep thinker. So much stress has been laid upon his dash as an officer that the public did not give him credit for the mental concentration he was capable of. He was a man of brain as well as heart, of thought as well as action.

He did not read much but did his thinking from an original basis, and with excellent results. I tell you Sheridan had a great head, well stored with useful knowledge. He was a methodical man, too, and a great worker. He personally went over all of his estimates and accounts in a systematic manner, trusting nothing to chance. Mentally he was not appreciated at his full worth. He was a great soldier and a noble man, and deserved all of the honors bestowed upon him. General Sheridan's services to his country could scarcely be overestimated. He was a man of quick perception, and as a commander had the faculty of grasping the whole situation on a field of battle intuitively, and history already records the valuable work he did in his country's defense."

The leading European generals all joined in paying General Sheridan a high tribute at the time of his death, pronouncing him one of the ablest cavalry commanders in the world, and saying, "All the armies of Europe have adopted many of the lessons taught by him in the tactical use of cavalry."

Archibald Forbes, the well-known English war correspondent, who has probably had as many opportunities of judging of the merits of different soldiers as any other civilian, and from whom words of praise are worth something, as they are based upon thorough knowledge, said in the London *Pall Mall Gazette*, November 26th last :

“ So brilliant was Sheridan’s work as a cavalry leader that his name has come to be associated chiefly with that role, but in this injustice has been done him, for he handled all arms with equal skill and enterprise, and in the success of the final and fiercest struggle that culminated in Lee’s surrender at Appomattox Court House, he stands out as the principal figure, in whose track of tornado-like energy Grant seems to have followed tamely. In the soldierly characteristics of Sheridan and Skobeloff, there was much in common. Both men had innate military genius — both possessed the magnetism which inspired to heroism the men they led, both, when occasion called, became veritable thunderbolts of war, both had their fighting ardor under control, and both were endowed with infinite capacity for taking pains to achieve success.”

I could easily give other similar high opinions of General Sheridan’s ability as a great general, but these will suffice. When impartial history shall recount the deeds and the services of General Sheridan, she will twine for him an enduring chaplet, and on it she will write in letters that will never fade, “THE PEER OF THEM ALL.”

